

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 /086 W
-----032912 061705Z /46

P 061535Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 751
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY
AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY

UNCLAS MONTREAL 1335

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC LIBERALS WIN BIG IN BYELECTION

1. IN FIRST ELECTORAL TEST SINCE PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) ELECTION OF NOVEMBER, 1976, PQ WAS REBUFFED AND QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY (QLP) A RESOUNDING SUCCESS. VOTERS IN NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRAVE RIDING BYELECTION YESTERDAY RETURNED REED SCOWEN, QLP, WITH 62 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, INCLUDING ELEVEN OF THE SIXTEEN POLLS IN THE FRENCH-SPEAKING AREA OF THIS PREDOMINANTLY ANGLOPHONE ZONE OF MONTREAL. PQ HAD TAKEN FIFTEEN OF THOSE SIXTEEN POLLS IN 1976.

2. VOTERS ALSO REBUFFED UNION NATIONALE (UN), WHICH HAD COME IN SECOND WITH 29 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN 1976. THIS TIME AROUND UN RAN A BAD LAST, ABOUT 1 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. SECOND PLACE WENT TO INDEPENDENT, DR. DAVID DEJONG, WHO RAN ON SINGLE ISSUE OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE OF LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION. HE COLLECTED ABOUT 25 PERCENT OF THE BALLOTS.

3. OVERALL TOTAL FOR PQ WAS 11 PERCENT, AS COMPARED TO 14 PERCENT IN 1976.

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4. COMMENT: ALL PUNDITS HAD AGREED FROM OUTSET THAT QLP ALMOST CERTAIN WINNER, AS LIBERALS HAVE HELD SEAT FOR SOME FORTY YEARS OF MORE. INTEREST HAS FOCUSED, THEREFORE, ON RELATIVE STRENGTHS TO BE REVEALED BY ELECTION. SCOWEN'S 62 PERCENT, VIS-A-VIS BRYCE MACKASEY'S 44 PERCENT IN 1976, COUPLED WITH DEMISE OF UN BEING TAKEN AS MARK OF CLAUDE RYAN'S EMERGENCE AS POPULAR QLP LEADER, DESPITE FACT THIS LOW-RATES SCOWEN'S UNQUESTIONABLE

SUPERIORITY TO OTHER CANDIDATES. DEFECTION OF FRANCOPHONE
VOTERS TO LIBERALS, ALTHOUGH VOTE VERY CLOSE IN MOST POLLS,
BEING HAILED BY RYAN AS INDICATION GENERAL POPULACE SEEKING
"MODERATION" -- A VIEW SUPPORTED BY RELATIVELY SMALL VOTE FOR
ANGLOPHONE "EXTREMIST" DEJONG. PQ CANDIDATE, MICHEL GELINAS,
NATURALLY DENIES BYELECTION RESULTS COULD CARRY ANY IMPLICATIONS FOR
FUTURE ELECTIONS OR EVEN PRESENT MOOD OF THE PEOPLE. PREMIER
LEVESQUE STILL WITHHOLDING COMMENT.
HARPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, BYELECTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTRE01335
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780277-0754
Format: TEL
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780791/aaaacymb.tel
Line Count: 71
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 146e827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2104759
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QUEBEC LIBERALS WIN BIG IN BYELECTION
TAGS: PINT, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/146e827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014